

28 August 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR : Director of Central Intelligence  
THROUGH :  *8/31/81*  
Executive Secretary  
(DCI/MAG Coordinator)  
FROM : DCI Management Advisory Group  
SUBJECT : Continued Requirement for the Advance Work Plan

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1. Action Required

It is requested that you consider the recommendation contained in paragraph 4 when making a final decision regarding retention and/or modification of the Advance Work Plan.

2. Background

The DCI Management Advisory Group (DCI/MAG) has learned that the Office of Personnel, after reviewing the results of an employee survey and with suggestions from the Personnel Management Advisory Board, is recommending modification of the Agency performance appraisal package (Performance Appraisal Report [PAR], Evaluation of Potential [EOP], and Advance Work Plan [AWP]). As you know the DCI/MAG was established to help identify and make recommendations on issues and problems arising out of the Agency's organization and management practices. As such, members are contacted by or are in touch with many different levels of employees. It was through these contacts and discussions among ourselves that the issue of the performance package was raised and our opinions formed.

3. DCI/MAG Position

a. Although the DCI/MAG has focused attention specifically on the AWP, we also offer the following comments on the PAR and EOP:

(1) The PAR is a key element in determining an employee's career development, advancement potential, and for the purposes of evaluating performance, achieving organizational goals and career development goals. It is also an important management tool for promoting continuing communication and understanding between supervisors and employees. For these reasons we support continued use of the PAR with its numerical grading system and narrative comments and we recommend only redesign and modification of the PAR form.

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(2) Although the EOP may have been designed to correct the frequent failure of raters and reviewers to comment on an employee's potential, it has not proven to be a worthwhile form. We believe that too often raters and reviewers are not in a position to adequately assess an employee's potential. Many supervisors feel the EOP is an extra burden in required paperwork and for expediency they check the box indicating they are unable to determine potential or indicate the employee has potential but fail to justify their assessment. We believe that in the future the assessment of potential can be addressed in the narrative of the PAR if supervisors wish to do so.

b. Based on MAG's personal experience as well as that of many of our peers, supervisors and managers, we believe that the AWP is an integral part of the performance package and that there is a continuing requirement for all employees (not just SIS personnel and problem cases) for an annual agreement between supervisors and employees on goals, objectives, and priorities for the work year. This is especially true for employees during the three year trial period. The AWP must at least define the standard of satisfactory level performance (level 4) for each duty and list the specific projects and tasks to be accomplished during the rating period.

c. An effective performance appraisal system should accomplish certain fundamental objectives among which are:

(1) Ensure each employee understands and agrees to specific duties and/or work objectives that are established in writing.

(2) Ensure each employee is aware that established benchmarks/standards will be measured at the end of the reporting period and will form the basis for the PAR rating and narrative comments.

d. It appears that when first introduced in 1979, the AWP may have been generally misconstrued by supervisors and subordinates as representing another revision of the old Letter of Instruction or as a condensed job description. In any case, the concept of performance standards was either overlooked, misunderstood, downplayed, or ignored. As a result, the AWP was not effectively implemented and we conclude that its generally poor reception is not necessarily a fair reflection of its value to the Agency. If we drop the AWP or make it optional we run the

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risk of conveying a message to employees that performance standards and objectives are not considered important by managers as we are deemphasizing it and this may cause more confusion and concern among employees considering the effectiveness of the PAR package.

4. Recommendation

We ask that you consider the following two recommendations in order of preference when making a decision on the utility and continued use of the AWP:

a. Continue for all employees the requirement for an annual AWP containing performance standards against which rating levels are measured.

b. If the AWP is not accepted for continued use by all employees, as a minimum, its use should be required for all employees during their three year trial period in addition to employees with real or potential performance problems, and all SIS personnel.

DCI Management Advisory Group